

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Higgins.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues. I would like to ask Senator Vard Johnson a question if he would yield.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Johnson, would you respond?

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Yes, Senator Higgins.

SENATOR HIGGINS: I'm sitting here in what might be called a little covey of quail and they keep saying to me, why do you Omaha senators want to introduce legislation that will affect us? And I said, well, I don't. And I don't think any other senator should try to push his particular views off on another part of the state. So there's two things I want to know from you, Senator Johnson, and you may take the rest of my time. Number one, does this bill, in fact, have any impact whatsoever on the Omaha school district or Douglas County schools? And, number two, why are you introducing this bill when all I hear around me is, we don't like it, we don't want it. And I almost feel like retribution is going to be coming to Omaha. So, with that, I'll leave you the rest of my time. Thank you.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Yes, I appreciate that, Senator Higgins...

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: ...that's very thoughtful of you to do that. The first...this bill does affect schools in Douglas County because I think, as Senator Lamb pointed out, there are a handful of Class I schools in Douglas County. So it is true that this bill would affect the Omaha area directly. But the real question is why is it that an Omaha legislator has the temerity, really, to even think about messing in someone else's pot, particularly when that pot is in the other part of Nebraska. Well, I suppose that one of the reasons I have the temerity to do it is that...is that we raise taxes for the support of state government throughout all of Nebraska, including Omaha. We have not been able to cut Omaha off from its tax generational capacity, and, in fact, Omaha, the urban areas are now raising more than 50 percent of the state's taxes through income and sales taxes. Now, those tax dollars are then distributed back out...well, some of those tax dollars go for the direct support of state government but other parts of that